

This Bulletin of the Thoreau Society comes after a long interval and will at least prove that the Society has not become a casualty of the war. Intervals between the bulletins may be long, but the Society can weather hard buffeting. It had better, for Thoreau is likely to be needed in the days ahead. Your officers know no more about those days than you do. But "Simplify, Simplify, Simplify" will be a pretty good trinity to hold to in those days. With the Bulletin comes a token Booklet No.2, abbreviated by shortages of paper, time, and text. The 1942 meeting paid some attention to the hundredth anniversary of the death of John Thoreau. Here, then, is the first picture of John Thoreau you ever owned. A few extra copies on hand at 10¢/

You may want to think about one item of business for a future meeting. The famous American sculptor Jo Davidson would like to make a statue of Thoreau to be placed in Concord. He offers to do it without fee except for actual expenses. The expense would be about \$10,000. It has been suggested (not by anyone in the Society) that the Thoreau Society sponsor the idea and endeavor to raise the \$1,000 required for the first step, getting the statue in plaster form. The president of your Society has some ideas about this suggestion. But you don't want his ideas. He'd lots rather have yours.

This year's Thoreau book is without question the painstaking and scholarly work of Carl Bode, COLLECTED POEMS OF HENRY THOREAU (Chicago: Packard and Company, 1943). The poems occupy 244 pages, followed by 130 pages of the most careful textual notes any writing of Thoreau ever received. There is an edition of the poems without the notes; but the notes make the present collection meaningful. A reader of the poems only might be bothered by the faulty capitalization, punctuation, and other errors. But with the notes he begins to see the poet at work on the poems -- scribbling some and polishing others. For one who has read the Thoreau manuscripts, this book is a marvel of the scholar's and printer's art in the way it reproduces the effect of the poems as they first came from the pen of Thoreau. What will be the effect on another reader? Will he catch the boyish quality of some of these pieces as well as if he had come upon them in David Henry's college notebook?

Doctor Bode's aim has been absolute completeness. As Thoreau did with life, he has driven these poems into a corner and made them prove their authenticity, by means of manuscript versions, Thoreau's own editing, and only at last (and, one feels, with great regret) by means of texts that can in any way be considered secondhand. Inclusiveness has its drawbacks. Some awful stuff has to be included merely for the sake of inclusiveness. A descending order of textual quality has its drawbacks too, for the literary quality of some of the later poems is higher than that of earlier poems whose texts are less vulnerable. But one can't make a book for everybody. There is one pleasure for the esthete and another pleasure for the student of variorum editions. This book, especially in its "critical edition," is for the latter. There is little comment on the beauties of Thoreau's poetry; but a reader with the right eyes will see that for himself. Sanborn's earlier editings get their due. Nor does the editor blame Henry Salt for the shortcomings of SONGS OF NATURE. That is as it should be. The letters that passed between Sanborn and Salt while the book was in progress prove that Salt was entirely dependent on Sanborn for texts of the poems. Maybe Sanborn but used Salt to give the book savour in England. One word more: The Packard company has made the book a thing of beauty.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY CONTINUING FROM JULY, 1942

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NO FORMAL MEETING, BUT AN INFORMAL ONE. It was "dat old debbil" War which brought about the omission of a meeting in Concord this year. The gasoline situation in the New England area was so very critical that Allen French and Secretary Longstreth wrote that a meeting was out of the question. This was so unquestionable that no meeting was attempted. We could have blamed the weather. One letter from Concord had this sentence: "One robin is known to have died of thirst while crossing a Victory Garden." . . . The only event reported from Concord that even resembled a Thoreau Society meeting is word that Allen French and Morris Longstreth ate dinner together on July 12th. . . . But a branch meeting in New York fared better. Walter Harding sent out a call over the whole metropolitan area and held a meeting on Sunday, July 18, in the Roosevelt Memorial Building of the Museum of Natural History. Twenty-five attended. Gasoline was no object; subways and Walt Harding's enthusiasm brought out a very satisfying, and also satisfied, crowd. . . . There had been some notion of ferrying to Staten Island for the meeting. Thoreau had been there a hundred years before and Max Cosman had recently written about his stay at William Emerson's.

In the midst of our hot North Carolina summer the local evening paper, tiring of the monotony of its weather reports, finally said, "Continued hot 'til further notice." And we settled down for some real weather. But weather does change, and appropriate to each month and season Adin Ballou's "After Reading Thoreau" sonnets have continued to appear in the New York Herald Tribune, until now he must have reached his hundred, and we may begin looking for a book of "After Reading Thoreau" sonnets. . . . Mr. Ballou had a splendid essay in the HERALD TRIBUNE on July 12th: his own recognition of Henry Thoreau's birthday. . . . But it is the New York SUN that recognizes the Society's meetings with editorials. In 1942 we were able to read an advance copy of the July 11th editorial at our Concord meeting before anyone in New York had read it in the SUN. In 1943 the informal local meeting in New York on the 18th of July called forth a SUN editorial on the 21st. If this keeps up, the Society will lift a sentence from the close of Thoreau's essay "Walking" and say, "The SUN on our backs seemed like a gentle herdsman driving us home at evening." Lots of New Yorkers in subways get home better at evening with a SUN before their faces. . . . Robert Francis, who like a gentle herdsman led us in Concord in 1942 in our ruminations about John Thoreau, has published privately a little book of his poems. When its first poem, "seagulls," appeared in the ATLANTIC almost a year ago, I thought it the best poem of the year. I still think so. Send a dollar to Robert Francis, Amherst, Mass., and ask him to mail you a copy of THE SOUND I LISTENED FOR. It will have the ring of beauty you've been listening for. The first poem will give you your dollar's worth. The rest will be velvet.

Announced for 1943 publication in the "Poets of the Year" series of pamphlets is AND YOU, THOREAU by August Derleth, nature poems in tribute to Thoreau. No copy is at hand; but the pamphlet edition should be available at 50¢ from New Directions, 67 West 44th Street, New York City. . . . It's a poor freshman reader these days that doesn't contain at least one selection from Thoreau. Even in war time his "Duty of Civil Disobedience" gets reprinted in the textbooks. There is one danger: getting into a textbook is almost as bad as getting into a shroud. Aunt Mary Moody Emerson wore out nine shrouds; and maybe Thoreau will wear out this textbook danger. . . . Which leads us to remark that both "Civil Disobedience" and E. B. White's "Walden" (from ONE MAN'S MEAT, 1942) are in the very lively and unshroudlike READINGS FOR CITIZENS AT WAR, edited by Theodore Morrison and other members of the English A staff at Harvard.

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